ISSUE ONE SERIAL 12/75 (4A)

IN-VISION

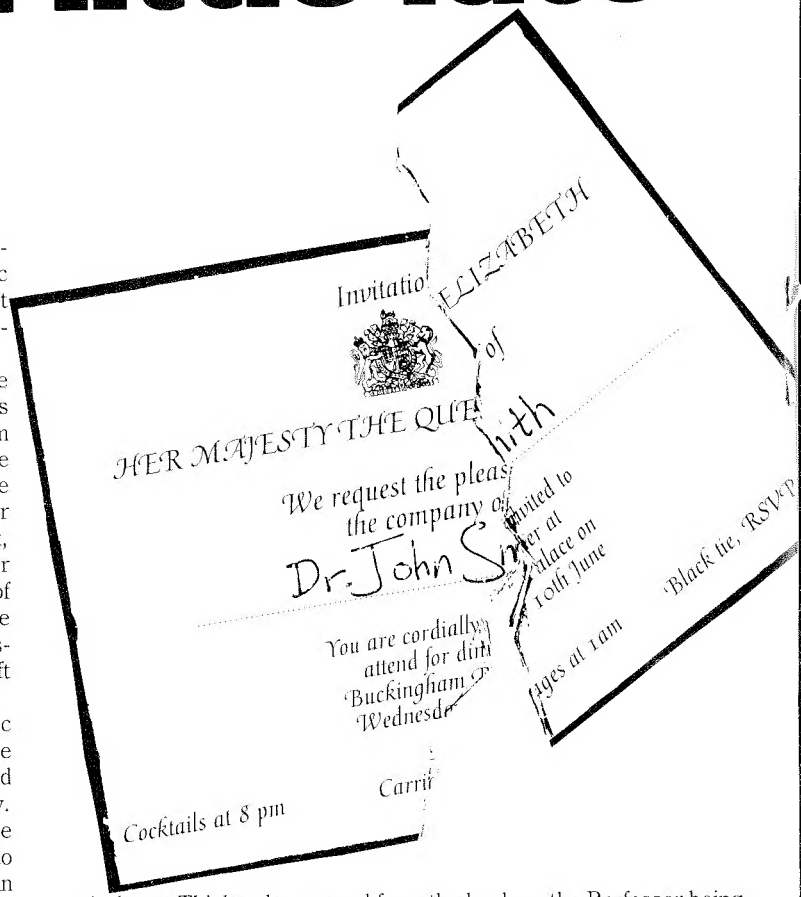
STARRING TOM BAKER AS THE DOCTOR!

DOCTOR WHO

ROBOT

CMS

He'll be a little late



"THE Doctor? No, I'm afraid the Doctor wasn't able to accompany me here today. I can only apologise for his rather eccentric behaviour, but he hasn't quite been himself of late... I can't begin to – well that's most gracious of you, to allow a relaxation of protocol in these circumstances.

How did the Doctor become involved in the Robot affair? Well, he has been acting for quite some time as UNIT's scientific advisor, his expertise has frequently proved invaluable. He was ahead of us from the start, deducing that something more than human was behind the spate of bizarre robberies. These culminated in the Thinktank people acquiring all the components necessary to build the Disintegrator Gun, despite UNIT's best efforts. Meanwhile the Doctor's assistant, Miss Smith, discovered that Thinktank had preserved Professor Kettlewell's K-1 robot. It presently became clear that the Director of Thinktank, Miss Winters, and her assistant Jellicoe, had overcome the creature's prime directive and caused it to kill, as your late Minister Sir Joseph Chambers found to his cost. That was during the theft of the nuclear Destructor Codes.

I myself discovered the link between Thinktank and the Scientific Reform Society, but once again it was Miss Smith who uncovered the extent of their aims, rather rashly going to one of their meetings and discovering that Professor Kettlewell was involved in the conspiracy. The Doctor put his own life on the line, not for the first time, to save her, and coupled with the arrival of my troops this rushed the SRS into action, and they retreated to their bunker. The Doctor assisted again by putting the bunker's conventional defences out of action, and was about to infiltrate the building when the Robot appeared with the disintegrator gun.

At this point Miss Smith, Professor Kettlewell and Surgeon Lieutenant Sullivan, who had been captured during an undercover

mission at Thinktank, escaped from the bunker, the Professor being killed by his own Robot's gun – the Robot then collapsed, as if it had some sort of breakdown on killing its creator. At any rate, this allowed my men the invade the bunker.

It was at this point that the Doctor performed the service for which you wished to honour him, by cancelling the Destructor Codes and preventing the unthinkable consequence of all-out nuclear war. I'm sure the full details will be supplied presently by the Defence Ministry should you care to study them. Miss Winters and Jellicoe, and their remaining cohorts were quickly arrested.

However the Robot, which had been presumed deactivated, recovered and kidnapped Miss Smith, to whom it had formed an almost emotional attachment after she had earlier shown concern for it – there was apparently something almost human about it. After unsuccessfully trying to restart the Destructor Code sequence, the thing left the bunker, where I tried to destroy it with the disintegrator gun.

Somewhat unfortunately, the metal the Robot was constructed from was a "living metal" which reacted by growing to an enormous size. Once again the Doctor came to our rescue, using Professor Kettlewell's own notes to concoct a "virus" which attacked the special metal. The Doctor managed to infect the Robot with this in a typically perilous manner and the Robot was finally disintegrated.

After these rather fraught adventures, perhaps you can find it in you to excuse the Doctor's leaving soon after this on a sort of holiday – I think one he had intended to take before the affair began. Indeed, I admit it is somewhat peculiar that he cancelled his excursion for the crisis and not for this luncheon. The Doctor's methods have always been a little idiosyncratic. As for his assistants, Miss Smith and Lieutenant Sullivan seem to have gone with the Doctor... no, I'm afraid I don't know where they have gone.

Yes, I'm sure that as soon as the Doctor gets back he will be more than honoured to take up your gracious invitation. I can only apologise once again for his behaviour, and hope that you feel yourself able to, in the in the circumstances, excuse his not wholly courteous conduct...Ma'am."

Andrew Martin

Robot: the definite article

WHEN asked about his aims in writing ROBOT, Terrance Dicks replied: "As all practising writers, my first aim was to sell the script and get the money, but also I wanted to give a good launch to the new Doctor and, obviously, make the whole thing different from the Pertwee days."

On actually viewing ROBOT, Dicks' last point may at first seem a little surprising. For in many ways the story conforms closely to our expectations of a typical Pertwee adventure. Since 1970, Dicks as script editor and Barry Letts as producer had established a distinctive style of **Doctor Who** story which drew on the action/adventure formula of James Bond movies.

In these so-called 'UNIT stories', Jon Pertwee's third Doctor took the role of a stylish avenger fighting alongside the military arm of the United Nations Intelligence Taskforce against a variety of terrestrial and extra-terrestrial invasions. The 'UNIT story' was characterised by shoot-outs, car and helicopter chases, explosions and an abundance of military hardware.

By 1974 such stories, partly for reasons of budget, had become a distant but persistent memory. So it is all the more surprising to find ROBOT is firmly in the UNIT tradition, and even promises something of a rejuvenation of the style.

The story pits the UNIT troops against a crypto-fascist, paramilitary, scientific elite armed to the teeth and supported by a giant robot, "a weapon that walks". The result provides plenty of opportunity for UNIT to show off their military muscle in a series of action-packed set pieces climaxing in an assault on the enemies' bunker. If the disintegration of the UNIT soldiers and their tank by the red laser ray of the robot owes something to the climax of George Pal's adaptation of *War of the Worlds*, then so much the better. H G Wells' story of Martian invasion provided the template for many science fiction films, and much of the third Doctor's Earth-based scenario.

In a story intended at least in part to redefine **Doctor Who** and its central character, we look for difference but find many aspects are very similar indeed. The Doctor's face may be different, but other faces are very familiar: the Brigadier, Benton and Sarah Jane Smith are all on hand.

In an interview for *Doctor Who Monthly Winter Special* (1981), Barry Letts shed light on this apparent contradiction. He explained the story's emphasis on UNIT and familiar UNIT personnel, noting that it was a technique of "good television".

He said: "Because the audience has not yet accepted the new Doctor, their sympathies are with the characters they know, and they are identifying with these characters as they react to the new and eccentric Doctor. The old characters, the Brigadier, Benton and Sarah, are there to reassure the viewing public that they are still watching **Doctor Who**."

Studies of television series have noted that producers and members of the television hierarchy use a 'rule of thumb' assumption that something similar but different is required "to reinvigorate a 'tired' format and ensure the success of time-slot scheduling" (Tulloch & Alvarado, *Doctor Who — The Unfolding Text* p63). Robert Banks Stewart's successive series about quirky individuals involved in detective stories (**Shoestring, Bergerac, Lovejoy, Call Me Mister**), provide a good example of this.

Similarly, the success of a long-running series is judged to be the result of its ability to manage the tension between the demand for novelty within convention. In **Doctor Who** the burden for providing novelty has normally been carried by the Doctor.

Tulloch and Alvarado note (*ibid*) that each Doctor "has been the site of intersection of different codes" and that each one has been "encouraged to foreground the rhetoric of difference". Therefore, the regeneration of the Doctor has normally signalled the regeneration of **Doctor Who**.

Analysis by TIM ROBINS

ROBOT deliberately counterpoints Tom Baker's appearance and actions to those of Pertwee. Pertwee's elegant, stylish, frilly seventies rock star image is replaced by Baker's eccentric, Bohemian costume with the now-definitive floppy fedora and long trailing scarf. The exteriority of Pertwee's Doctor as 'man of action' is contrasted with the interiority of Baker's portrayal. Unlike the third Doctor, the fourth solves problems not by Venusian Aikido but by "more thinking".

In the popular press, Pertwee complemented his man of action portrayal by talking of his interest in exciting modes of transport, stunts and his 'adventurous' lifestyle. On assuming the role of the fourth Doctor, Tom Baker spoke of his time as a monk, of contemplating his own identity and his concern with establishing the Doctor's alienness. The fourth Doctor's lapses into immobility, Baker's open-mouthed, wide-eyed look staring at a point offscreen, call attention to the Doctor's thoughts rather than his actions. Of Pertwee's Doctor we would ask 'What is he going to do next?'. Of this new, contemplative Doctor, we ask 'What is he thinking about?'

Where the fourth Doctor does engage in physical action, the previous Doctor's aikido is replaced by a non-combative, defensive style where the Doctor seems to defeat his opponents by accident — as they trip over his scarf or himself as he bends down to do up his shoelaces. Pertwee's mantle of Bondian hero is firmly placed on Harry's shoulders when Sarah tells the companion the adventure is his chance "to be a real James Bond".

Similarity and difference also provide the basis for much of the humour in ROBOT. Here is is worth contrasting the first episode of the third Doctor's regeneration story SPEARHEAD FROM SPACE (serial AAA) with the first episode of ROBOT. The first thing to be noticed is the powerful force of continuity present in ROBOT. By 1974, **Doctor Who** had a large established audience. There was no talk of cancellation as there had been in 1969. There was no need for the show actively to seek out a new adult audience as the first Pertwee season had had to do.

Furthermore, under Dicks and Letts the programme had established a strong internal continuity, a mythology, whilst emerging fandom, Target book adaptations and the *Radio Times Tenth Anniversary Special* had made people aware of that *mythos*.

In ROBOT, there is no question that Tom Baker is the Doctor, however eccentrically he may behave. PLANET OF THE SPIDERS (serial ZZZ), repeated in a 106-minute special on the day before episode one of ROBOT was transmitted, contains a clear explanation of regeneration and, more significantly and like the Brigadier, we see it happen this time.

There is little or none of the confusion of identity which accompanied previous (or subsequent) regenerations. The regeneration itself remains to date the most visible, least mystifying to appear in the show. Achieved as a mix between Pertwee's and Baker's features, it leaves us in no doubt that this is the Doctor — the same person, but with a different face.

The Brigadier's words "here we go again" seem to emphasise that we are watching nothing out of the ordinary. Harry's bewilderment at the Doctor wins no sympathy from the audience who, like the regular cast, have all witnessed the event. This is quite different from SPEARHEAD FROM SPACE, where we could identify with Liz Shaw and the Brigadier — seeing a total stranger who has staggered out of the TARDIS. In ROBOT, we can all share a laugh at Harry's expense. There can be no doubting that this Doctor is "the definite article".

MORE directly, ROBOT plays on events in the first episode of SPEARHEAD FROM SPACE by including a comic version of Pertwee's 'adult' style of the new-look series with scenes shot with almost documentary realism. The Doctor was treated as a high-security-risk patient, and his alien physiology established through a series of medical tests. In ROBOT, Tom Baker grabs Harry's stethoscope, finds both hearts in working order and goes skipping. Dicks noted the inclusion as a bit of "script editor's continuity" by having the Doctor, in Pertwee's jacket and a nightshirt, searching for the TARDIS key. He finds it in his shoes — the obvious place for those who could remember SPEARHEAD.

The Doctor's eccentricity does not only signify difference in relation to the series similarity. Within the story itself, it is juxtaposed with the 'mechanical' similarity of the robot and the members of the Scientific Reform Society. ROBOT not only carries the burden of redefining **Doctor Who** but, being a robot story, it is concerned with the definition of humanity in relation to the non-human, as represented by the machine.

The word 'robot' comes from the play *R.U.R.* (Rossum's Universal Robots) written by the Czechoslovakian playwright Karel Capek in 1920, and translated into English in 1924. 'Robot' is derived from the Czech word *robota*. In *Asimov on Science Fiction* (Panther, 1984), Isaac Asimov argues that the word *robota* should be translated as 'slave'. But he notes, "slave, however, is a word commonly used for human beings, and it would make it difficult to distinguish between the natural and artificial variety".

The notion of robots and slave and, more interestingly, the ambiguity surrounding a robot's status as human being, has remained a defining characteristic of robot stories.

Typically dystopian robot stories embody two concerns: that technology will one day be capable of building machines, robots, that will surpass and replace mankind, and that robots may begin to reproduce themselves, giving rise to a future dominated by a mechanical species.

In his book *Alien Encounters* (Havard, 1981), Mark Rose equates machines with death — they are dead matter ("walking dead" as Poul calls them in the aptly named ROBOTS OF DEATH, see serial 4R). Rose argues that the fear of robots is the fear of death. This makes a robot a monster in the classical sense: it is an

omen from beyond death portending the fear of mankind, or rather that life may become like death.

In ROBOT, Dicks pays lip-service to this vision. The story opens with K-1 as *robota*, slave. Jellicoe feeds Sarah with comforting words that could have come straight from a **Tomorrow's World** script: "It is built into the robot's very being that it must serve humanity and never harm it". The robot itself tells us: "I am experimental robot K-1. My eventual purpose is to replace the human being in a variety of difficult and dangerous tasks". By episode four, the robot is fulfilling its destiny as an angel of death. Deep in a bunker, preparing to unleash nuclear holocaust on humanity, it promises to emerge to "build more machines like myself". Its intentions are to repopulate the Earth with its own mechanical kind.

The physical usurpation of humanity by machines is not the most interesting of the concerns surrounding notions of the robotic, and belongs less to a truly dystopian vision than to the technophiliac purveyors of popular science who view technology as ever-progressing, forever transcending the shortfalls and foibles of 'mere' humanity. Of more significance to ROBOT is the more interesting concern that science and its machines are making us robots.

Miss Winters, in her speech delivered in true Nuremburg Rally style to the members of the Scientific Reform Society, describes the robot as "the symbol of our movement, the creature whose intelligence and power make him (*sic*) a fitting emblem of our scientific new order". In fact, the robot is a fitting emblem in other ways.

For example, it is a slave, its relationship with the SRS elite mirroring the master-slave relationship that the SRS intend to impose on mankind. Humans are to become organic robots in a society based on mass production, on conformity and obedience. These intentions are made clear in episode two in the key scene (according to Terrance Dicks) in which Short exemplifies the SRS philosophy in his discourse on the 'suitability' of Sarah Jane's "attire".

This scene makes clear the nature of the SRS plans for a new society modelled on the master/slave relationship of programmer/robot, on conformity and obedience and on the criteria of brute necessity. Mark Rose notes that robot stories tend to revolve around a 'master-slave anatomy' and tend to incorporate some form of opposition between reason and passion, between rigidly mechanical logic and flexible human feeling, and between determinism and free will.

ROBOT is no exception: conflict in the story arises from the confrontation and ambiguity of such binary oppositions. Humanity is identified with irrationality, idiosyncrasy, emotionality, 'difference'. The non-human, the mechanical is identified with rationality, conformity, lack of emotion, similarity. And of course the opposition of life/death; Sarah's sexuality signifies life, while the machine, unalive matter, signifies death.

The struggle between human difference and mechanical similarity extends beyond ROBOT to encompass the production of the story itself. But Terrance Dicks points out that he was anxious not to create characters that were simply "black and white". The nature of humanity and of the machine is questioned and defined because the character occupy a third position between the oppositions. The SRS are living, organic human beings and yet they suppress their humanity. Like the Cybermen, they week to turn themselves into cold, unfeeling machines. Dicks describes them as "repressed". What is being repressed is their humanity.

Because the K-1 robot is not an animal like King Kong, it has to be made to look human to allow us to sympathise with it. The Doctor and Miss Winters both chide Sarah for her anthropomorphic concern. Sarah asks: "How can you be sure it doesn't have feeling too?" And the Doctor has to admit, "Yes, I suppose you could say it was human." But unlike humans, like Kettlewell, the robot cannot change its 'mind': it has to complete its programming, a point reinforced by its actions after Kettlewell's death.

UNLIKE the Cybermen, though, ROBOT does not simply address the physical sense in which science and its machines are making us robots, as in the comic strip antics of **The Six Million Dollar man** (being watched on Sundays in 1975 by larger audiences than **Doctor Who**). The idea that humans actually were machines may arguably be traced to the seventeenth century. But if the seventeenth century conceived the mechanistic vision of the universe, the nineteenth century gave it birth with the Industrial Revolution acting as midwife.

At first machines were seen as the liberators of life, but dissenting views were soon voiced. Thus John Ruskin (1819-1900) was moved to write: "Men were not intended to work with the accuracy of tools, to be precise and perfect in all their actions. If you will have that

Robot: the definite article

precision out of them and make their fingers measure degrees like cog-wheels and their arms strike curves like compasses, you must unhumanise them. All the energy of their spirits must be given to make cogs and compasses of themselves" (quoted in Rose, *ibid*).

Ruskin's words were strikingly visualised in **Metropolis** (Fritz Lang, 1926). It is a definitive robot story, for it explores the nature of the robotic in contrast with humanity and finds the robotic, not in the robot replica of the heroine Maria (visual ancestor of **Star Wars**' C3PO), but in the workers whose humanity is crucified on the controls of the machine, whose actions have become mechanical under the factories' disciplinary regimes.

Today information technology and micro-processors may have surpassed iron and steel as the defining metaphors of the age, but the image of human made machine *by* the machine on which s/he works is no less valid. Computer data storage systems are used to provide models of human memory. Gradually, 'as if' becomes 'is' since, to program a computer, its human programmer must think like the machine. Primary school children are taught to order their thoughts like flow charts. The publisher of *Starlog* wrote in March 1986, with no sense of impending doom or even irony: "We learn math, history and English; but we don't learn *thinking*... Basic Thinking 301 would show us the joys of thinking and the benefits of consciously programming our minds to harmonize with the facts of humanity". Spoken like a true member of the Scientific Reform Society.

But as an actor, Tom Baker struggled to impose human (or inhuman) difference of the mechanical demands of script and role. To the press, he explained he felt intimidated by the role of the Doctor, and certainly felt constrained by the series' continuity and melodramatic form. Reflecting on the role years later, he restated what had become his familiar complaint (*Doctor Who - The Unfolding Text*, p204).

"One of the problems about playing the Doctor... is that the character is very, very severely limited. There are boundaries over which the Doctor can't go... The hero in melodrama always adopts moral viewpoints, he is totally predictable, so how can you surprise people. You have to be inventive within the limits of predictability, and that's the fun. The jelly babies were my idea."

Ironically, fans have noted that the jelly babies were themselves an established part of the Doctor's character in the Chaplinesque persona of Patrick Troughton's portrayal. Intended as a sign of idiosyncrasy, of non-conformity, they become instead another example of novelty within conformity, similar but different.

Therefore, ROBOT acts as a metaphor for the programme's conditions of existence, chronicling not only the conflict between the mechanical and human (similarity/difference) but also in the way that the story is produced. Costume designer Jim Acheson reflected that the BBC is a machine for producing a required number of programme hours per week. **Doctor Who** is a product of that machine, a programme with all that that implies.

Back in 1963, **Doctor Who** was created as part of the BBC's attempt at winning back viewers from ITV and, in particular, from the opposition's new slick adventure series. **Doctor Who**'s episodic format, its continuing characters, its regular slot in the schedule and its cliffhanger endings were products of the art of programming.

Part of that art of programming may be seen as being programming the audience to tune in next week. It is not surprising to read in Eric Paice's book on television writing that **Doctor Who**'s creator Sydney Newman compares television audiences to Pavlovian dogs, with a conditioned response in the way they tune in to programmes.

The extent to which ROBOT fulfilled its programming and the audience fulfilled its own can be measured by the fact that ROBOT delivered such a large audience for the first episode of THE ARK IN SPACE (see next issue, serial 4C), all willingly echoing the Brigadier's words: "Here we go again". □

ONE of the first things I did when I got into the office was to get in touch with Audience Research and say 'Please can we have a breakdown'. I can't remember if they had the figures, or whether they gave them to me on the initial shows for Pertwee. We discovered that our audience was 58 per cent adults, which includes parents watching with their children, of course. That influenced things enormously in respect to the way I approached the show.

When I took over, THE SILURIANS was actually shooting, they were doing the film and the sets were being built for the studio. AMBASSADORS OF DEATH was in the process of its seventeenth rewrite! And INFERNO was just a twinkle in our eye – nothing had been decided at all. Terrance said, 'Don Houghton's coming in, he's got some sort of idea.' So he came in, and we started then and there with his idea, and from that developed INFERNO. He had the idea of the Mole Hole Project, and the three of us thrashed out the idea of the parallel world to go with it.

Huw Wheldon wrote us a firm memo after the scare of TERROR OF THE AUTONS. Apart from that, the only contact we had with him was at a departmental meeting in TV Centre, when he said: 'There are only two programmes which must be watched in the world of the Wheldon household; one is **Match of the Day**, and the other is **Doctor Who.**'

Because we were pioneers on CSO, we were

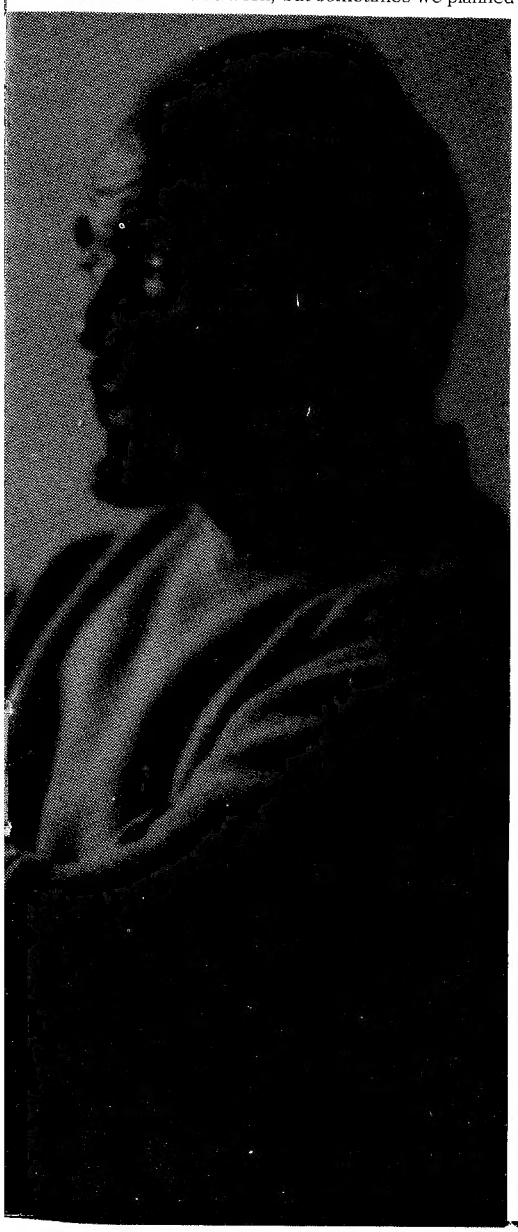
Letts' diary

When Barry Letts started as producer of **Doctor Who** *on 20 October, 1969, his brief was: "Do it for a year, and in the meantime look for something to replace it." Over five years later, his final story as producer – ROBOT – ushered in a new era and a new Doctor.*

allowed to play around. We were given a studio for a whole day for AMBASSADORS OF DEATH, just to experiment with the CSO, and then again for CLAWS OF AXOS. We actually recorded our experiment, but they were nothing we could use in the show. We were just trying things to see if they would work. That was when I first got interested in doing models. I asked the visual effects people to bring down any model buildings that they had (this was before AMBASSADORS OF DEATH), and we stood them up, and we stood blue flats up that coincided with the edges of the model houses on the other picture, and we had our Assistant Floor Manager (Margot Heyhoe) walking out from behind the flats so she appeared on the composite picture to walk out from behind a house. It worked very well. On the strength of that we had Jon Pertwee walking into the space ship in a model. But it didn't work, and we couldn't think why till we realised that the model had a rough floor, and he was walking on a smooth floor. So he had to lift his feet up as though he was walking on a rough floor, and it fairly well worked.

I have always been intrigued by the idea of using models. As a director and a producer I've explored that, making whole sets out of models in **Gulliver in Lilliput** and **Alice in Wonderland.** That's why I wanted to see if we could get away with using a model tank in ROBOT.

The Metabelis scenes in PLANET OF THE SPIDERS were incredibly difficult to do. Sometimes it didn't work – although there's nothing on the screen that didn't work, but sometimes we planned



things that we had to abandon because there wasn't time to do it. There are two shots in particular... When the Doctor comes back and talks to the humanoid people in the last episode before he goes off to the Great One, there is an exterior shot of the Doctor in wide shot. There is a hut or a village, and two characters come out. I did a jump cut as they approached and he came into shot and they had a little conversation. That originally was a very complicated sequence to have been done with model backgrounds. When it came to it, it was shot in the last half minute of an over-run, and we forgot to change the background. If you look closely, you cut from a wide shot of these people to a much closer shot of them – and the background stays absolutely still! But it's such a difference in size of people that your eye is caught by them and you don't look at the background.

> *"I have always been intrigued by the idea of using models. As a director and producer I've explored that"*

We were always short of money. Producers are always trying to find cheap shows to try to balance the ones they know are going to be very expensive. If I'd asked for the sort of budget I was getting after five years (in real terms) at the beginning of the five years, that would have been stupid. But I just got it pushed up each year. I was usually able to say about a particular area (and the biggest area was visual effects): 'Look, this is what it has cost. Look back over the past, and you'll see this is one of the reasons for the over-spend. So since we've actually been spending the money, why don't you allocate it in the first place?"

The cross-over period between myself and Philip Hinchcliffe was quite lengthy. While I was still producer, Philip hung around; and then after he became producer, I hung around to hand over. So I was there during THE SONTARAN EXPERIMENT and I was there for THE ARK IN SPACE and made various comments.

One of the things that was good about the set up was that all the departments had an input. So anybody could come up with an idea, and go to the producer or director, who would say 'That's a good idea.' And that would include the actors as well. Tom was doing it all the time and was very good about it – you either said 'Great!' or else you said, 'No Tom!' He had a very nice way of doing it, he would say: 'I've got an idea. Why don't I, as I come in the door, drop my hat?' And we'd say, 'Hmm.' Then he'd say: 'Why don't I, as I come in the door, don't drop my hat?!'.

ROBOT actually started the week before the New Year. That was my pressure. We felt that the week one start was okay for the beginning of a season, but by the time you got to six months later, you really were having trouble with the light. Everyone was out playing tennis and so on! There's no point in playing the best show in the world to an empty house – you want to get a good audience. Every producer wants to get the highest audience he can for his show. Even if he's doing a minority show he wants everybody of that minority to watch.

PLANET OF THE SPIDERS was far more my 'epitaph' than ROBOT. I had far more input and directed it myself, and we said goodbye to Jon. With ROBOT, the main thing was to try to get a good exciting show for the first one of the new Doctor, so that I could hand the success over to Philip Hinchcliffe.

Basically, with Tom Baker, we decided to go away from Jon Pertwee. People came up with all sorts of ideas which would have looked like an attempt to duplicate Jon – a poor man's Jon Pertwee. So what we looked for was a strong personality in its own right.

Roger was going to leave anyway, but after Katy and Roger left, I never felt – as Jon I think did – that was when things started to break up. After Katy left we still had some really epic shows. We still had UNIT, after all, and we still had Jon, and Lis Sladen. Lis was not a substitute for Katy, she was a fantastic companion in her own right.

I was quite sad when I found the producers after me actually dropping UNIT. I thought it was a pity, though I could understand it. Terrance and I changed the show radically during the five years that we had.

One of the reasons why we left – and we discussed it at the time – was that we'd been on it so long that practically any idea that came up, we felt: 'But we've done that.' New producers coming in would look at it and think 'Oh, that's a great story', and then it would be entirely and utterly different from the time we did it before. We were getting an awful feeling of déjà vu. □

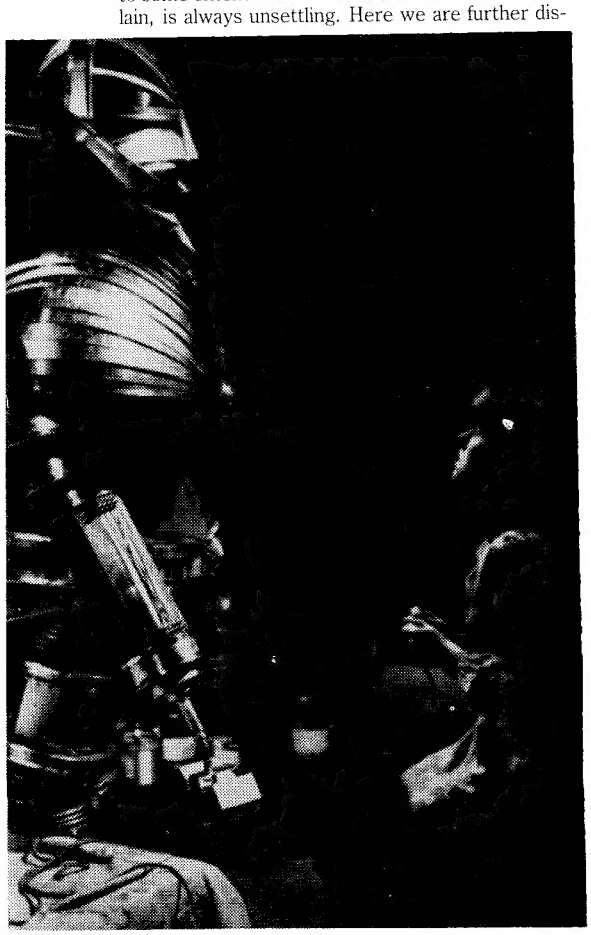
A fitti

FOR the first story of a Doctor, something striking is needed, something to effect the transition. Patrick Troughton's first story succeeded by offering Daleks (serial EE, THE POWER OF THE DALEKS) — always guaranteed to get an audience.

Jon Pertwee was almost absent from his first episode, the emphasis remaining throughout on the strong plot and production, the attention instead focused on the familiar UNIT set-up (and especially the character of the Brigadier) and the novelty of colour pictures. The new Doctor is allowed to grow into the part until we feel at home with him there (serial AAA, SPEARHEAD FROM SPACE). Tom Baker's story tried a different technique.

As a **Doctor Who** story, there is little remarkable about ROBOT apart from its two title stars — the Doctor and the robot. The latter is an excellent design given strength and credibility by actually being constructed of metal. Size always makes for an impressive monster, but even before we see the robot we are hooked by the fleeting glimpses of its metal-claw hands, by the radiophonic bleeps it emits while tearing its way through barbed wire, chains and armoured doors. The Doctor's description to the Brigadier of what they are dealing with serves two purposes: it confirms our ideas about the robot's strength and intelligence, and it demonstrates that the new Doctor has all the analytical skill of his predecessors — a point reinforced by his examination of the crushed dandelion.

The care lavished upon ROBOT is masked, so it does not distract from the two central figures, in particular the Doctor. The simple device of using the robot's point of view as it attacks the security guards and raids the electronics stores is meticulously executed. The effect of seeing through the eyes of a character or creature with whom we are not sympathetic, of being forced to identify at least to some extent with someone we know to be the villain, is always unsettling. Here we are further distanced by the height of the robot, and by the distorted vision and the electronic noises echoing in our real-time perception. This effect is used on occasion even after we know what the robot looks like. Twice it is particularly effective.



One of these occasions is in the fourth episode, when we again see from the robot's point of view. By now it has grown to giant size, so the view is even more distanced from our perceptions of reality. More subtly, our perception of the robot itself has altered as the story has unwound. We see the same actions through the robot's eyes — attacking and killing the UNIT troops as they retreat — but now we, like Sarah, feel some degree of conscious sympathy for the robot. The image is both removed further physically, yet easier to relate to emotionally.

The other occasion is when, less subtly but more effectively, we see Sarah from the robot's perspective at the end of the first episode. From this brief image, we know at once that the robot at Think Tank is the creature sought by the Brigadier, and that Sarah is in extreme danger. The point is emphatically made, and in a very short time.

Just as our perceptions of the robot are carefully defined and then slowly manipulated, so too is our view of the new Doctor. The immediate image of him, well-groomed and stylishly kitted out in his predecessor's clothes, jars with his seeming degradation in terms of intelligence — an intelligence many take for granted after five years of Jon Pertwee, the longest lead tenure in the programme that far. Yet he quotes himself from INVASION OF THE DINOSAURS (serial WWW), so he must be the same person. We begin to doubt this a little, despite the easy acceptance by Brigadier, Benton and Sarah, when the Doctor begins dressing as clown, viking, king, before realising that the Brigadier is afraid that, for someone attached to a top secret security organisation, he might attract some attention.

The result of this scene, however, is that both the audience and the Brigadier are more than ready to accept a costume that would otherwise seem far too grubby and eccentric after the suave image of Pertwee. (It is a pity that this point was to be lost when the scene was imitated for Romana's regeneration in DESTINY OF THE DALEKS. See serial 5J).

It is at this point that we are reassured by the Doctor's assessment of the crushed dandelion. Despite the eccentricity and the outfit, we are told, the Doctor is as brilliant as ever. It only remains for his outlandish humour and his keen mind to work together — as he predicts that the robot will tunnel in and steal the focusing generator, using an imitation of the *Titanic* to emphasis his point — and the character is completed for us to accept.

Eccentricity has always been an attribute of the Doctor's. His distinctive, bohemian costume is provided for other reasons. In the context of this story, James Acheson is careful that all the other character, and especially the UNIT troops and the uniform-thinking members of the SRS, are drably and conventionally attired. Short even uses Sarah's rather plain trouser suit as an example of how he wishes to change the world. In an 'ideal', Sarah would wear what the authorities deemed it suitable for her to wear. The example is made more extreme by the fact that her costume is so conventional. By contrast, the brilliant scientists — Kettlewell and the Doctor — stand out. Kettlewell is blustery and forgetful, and his clothing reflects his character, suggesting he quite simply never remembers (or bothers) to change. The Doctor's image is sharper, and his silhouette crisper: coat, hat and scarf.

The costume is certainly memorable in terms of these three main components, and so (like the shape and sound of a Dalek) ideal for children to relate to, recognise immediately, and imitate — as clever and enduring a marketing job as is ever likely to be found for a television character. Even today, a national newspaper can comment at Sylvester McCoy's initial press call that the scarf is in some way *de rigeur* for the Doctor.

Review by
ALISON BAUGET

The emphasis of the story is very much on the Doctor's character. The plot is thin by comparison, although Kettlewell's dual role (which the Doctor discerns almost instinctively) is well-disguised. The SRS are as bland and boring a fanatical right wing organisation as can be found, despite their appreciation of the Doctor's cabaret act. Their leaders, Hilda Winters and Arnold Jellicoe, come across as cold as her name. Their saving grace is that the lack of emotion at once makes them seem aloof and inhuman (Miss Winters chides Sarah for being "the sort of girl who gives motor cars pet names"), and contrasts with the emerging, 'human' character of the robot they are misusing.

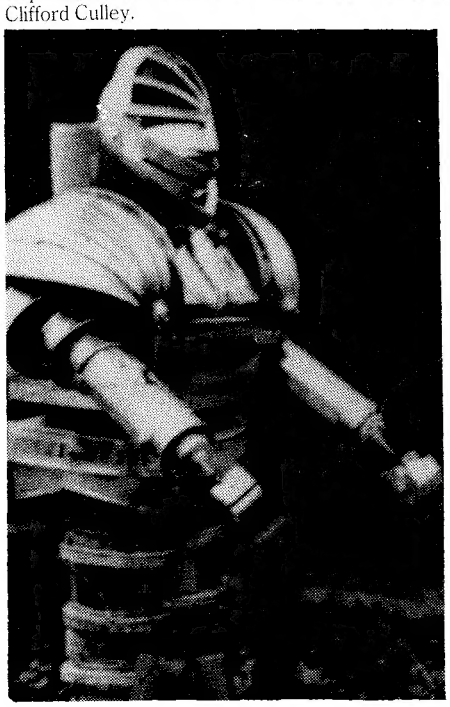
For the others, nothing is added to our knowledge and perceptions of Sarah's character, although she does engage in some witty banter with Benton and the Brigadier, both of whom share a low-key involvement with Harry Sullivan. Harry himself is a little lost since the Doctor hogs the limelight. His abortive James Bond impersonation at Think Tank is potential lost: we see him arrive, forget he is there, then he is found, coshed and held with Sarah as a hostage. Kettlewell comes across as the archetypal blusteringly brilliant scientist, but no-one else from Think Tank is as well-delineated.

But all this is not to say that ROBOT is a slow or boring story. The contrast between the Doctor and the rest of 'his' side, and the robot and its 'allies', is well-pointed. And while what happens is for the main part fairly conventional, the events are imbued with style by the Doctor and the dialogue, presented with dramatic verve and pace by the production crew. There may be little of note apart from Tom Baker and Michael Kilgariff's robot, but there is less about which to complain. The script is careful to apportion the emphasis correctly, and succeeds in focusing on the Doctor and the robot (and Sarah's

ng emblem

relationship with the robot, which also enables the audience to engage with it).

Where the production does flag a little is in the effects work. For the most part this is competent, but as with the model dinosaurs in INVASION OF THE DINOSAURS, the effect of the robot towering above the English countryside and chasing after UNIT, crushing soldiers and buildings under its feet, is less than totally convincing. Despite the improved marriage of images (achieved by shooting both on video for this story), the lighting is slightly different and the alignment is not always perfect. The worst of these composite shots is of the tank rolling up at the end of episode three (and, unfortunately, returning for an encore at the start of episode four). The model never looks like anything other than what it is — an Action man toy requisitioned on behalf of UNIT by effects designer Clifford Culley.



The direction and camerawork are otherwise always well-achieved. Christopher Barry's direction of the robot is especially worthy of note. It always seems powerful, threatening and 'heavy', particularly in the low lighting of the bunker as it waits with Sarah for armageddon. The only problem is its lack of speed. It is difficult to imagine how it escapes from Kettlewell's, being fired upon by Benton and his men, without at least one of them managing to follow it back to Think Tank, or to its waiting transport. It suffers a similar loss of credibility when escaping from the SRS meeting to the waiting lorry.

The robot's menace, along with the 'background' effects of radiophonic sound (especially the robot sounds and the noises accompanying the missile countdowns) and the incidental music supply much of the tension in the story. The robot's internal radiophonics become more insistent and frantic as it reaches its target each time. Dudley Simpson's music is as strident as ever, but the metallic strength of it serves to enhance the images of the robot, and the robot's theme (creeping, and heavily slow) suggests its lurking menace in scenes where it does not appear.

An air of tension is built up throughout, culminating in the countdown to the missile launch as the Doctor types away at the computer console to countermand the destructor codes. As the final digits flash up on the screen, the camera zooms closer on each, before panning to the Doctor with his feet up on the computer panel, grinning as the countdown stops. And we can breath again — until Sarah comes face to face with the reactivated robot a few moments later.

ROBOT is carefully made, yet there is always care that the production should not distract or draw attention to itself. What we are shown must relate to the Doctor's character, to building the credibility of the threat (in particular the robot), and furthering the plot. A good example of all of these points is the note the Doctor leaves for Sarah when he goes to meet Kettlewell. He is aware of the very real danger he may be in, to the point of leaving the message in case he is unable to cope with any trap.

In plot terms, the note explains where the Doctor has gone and why, emphasising the possible danger. But we also see the Doctor type the note at incredible speed, evidencing him as being just as capable and brilliant as his predecessors (and just as superhuman), and makes credible his rapid reprogramming of the SRS computer in the final episode: the Doctor types furiously at the console as the countdown nears zero. Since this scene is absent from the Target novel (see issue 6), it seems probable that it was added late to establish just this point. It is an interesting moment in a largely conventional story.

ROBOT does not offer any of the old monsters as an attraction, or even provide an especially strong story to distract us from the change in persona of the Doctor. It gives us, quite simply, more of what we are used to, and allows the new Doctor to become known to us through his association with a familiar scenario and set of characters. Some rather unpleasant people are using a large robot to help them do some rather unpleasant things. Add the token political comment, UNIT, Sarah Jane, and the revelation that the already-large robot can grow to (literally) quite incredible proportions, and the audience is presented with a typical **Doctor Who** story of the day.

With such distractions as novelty left largely to one side, the viewer is free to concentrate on coming to know and respect the new Doctor. Terrance Dicks observes that "the story was really a fairly conventional **Doctor Who** story, and the point was that it was to be the same framework for the new Doctor. I think you would have overloaded everything if you'd wanted to take a new and strange and alien world with lots of strangenesses! The idea was that we would do an earth story, and a UNIT story in homely, familiar surroundings. All of that was really a setting so we could look at the new Doctor, and see him banging about, upsetting people and annoying the Brigadier, and generally being weird and strange and eccentric."

Of course, it is not that simple. Terrance Dicks does not just throw all the usual ingredients into his plot, make a wish and stir well, any more than the director asks his camera crew to look exclusively for Mr Baker's winning smile. The story must focus on the new Doctor, but without obvious detriment to the other regular characters or the whole point of including them (to let us in gently) is lost. Similarly, the robot must be as impressive as possible so as not to detract from its adversary and steal the laughs. The threat from the SRS must be as real as possible so that the new Doctor can gain credibility and *kudos* by defeating them.

"The costume is memorable . . . a clever and enduring marketing job"

The story tries not to use, but to exploit, the **Doctor Who** format of the Pertwee era. Having Sarah meet the robot at the end of episode one may be reminiscent of other episode endings where a companion is threatened, but not only does it offer the information coded into the robot's-eye vision of Sarah, but it also allows the Doctor an extra episode before the audience is asked to sympathise with his similar jeopardy.

Three things remain memorable from ROBOT. In that the story is remembered both for the impressive robot and as Tom Baker's first story, it seems to have succeeded in its soft approach to introducing the new Doctor. So perhaps we can forgive it for the third thing being that model tank. □

ROBOT was always designed to open the twelfth season of **Doctor Who** at around Christmas 1974, but it was produced as the last story of the season eleven recording block, concluding the ten-month long, twenty-six episode **Doctor Who** 'year' which had begun with INVASION OF THE DINOSAURS (serial WWW).

Although Philip Hinchcliffe was trailing Barry Letts as producer of **Doctor Who** for ROBOT, he made no great contribution to the story, but was involved in defining the character of the new Doctor. Barry Lett says: "What we looked for was a strong personality in its own right. We had a meeting in the 'Balzac' – there was Tom, Phil Hinchcliffe, Bob Holmes and me. This was before Philip took over. And we discussed the way Tom was going to play the Doctor. The floppy hat and so on was Tom's idea stemming from me saying that the one thing he mustn't be was a dandy, as Jon had played him so. And what came out of that conference was fed back to Jim Acheson."

Tom Baker was introduced as the new Doctor at a photo-call in mid February, 1974.

Baker's costume for ROBOT was the responsibility of costume designer James Acheson: "I was left pretty much to my own devices to come up with something. They kept saying they wanted a new image for the Doctor, so what we did was spend a lot of time with Tom Baker and had what we call 'stock-fittings', where you take them to a costume house and you try on all sorts of different types of jacket and hat on them, in the idea of building up an image. I think although one wasn't overtly doing it, there's a poster by Lautrec with a big red scarf, and I think one was probably unconsciously influenced by that. There was a sense of image – the fedora, and the scarf, and the jacket.

"It was more eccentric, not flamboyant. Pertwee was very flamboyant, but whereas Pertwee was much more the sartorial, frilly, velvety, greying Doctor Who, Baker was this much more manic, scarecrow-like, slightly more dangerous Doctor Who."

The length of the famous scarf came about by accident. Acheson intended the Doctor to wear a scarf, and bought a pile of wool for it. This he gave to a little lady in Putney, named Begonia Pope, who he knew knitted, and asked her to produce a scarf from it. "When I went round to collect the scarf, it was twenty feet long. Then, when I got it round Tom Baker, he liked the idea. I think we cut a few feet off it, but he used it as a prop. He tripped villains up with it."

An example of this is when the Doctor pulls his scarf from under the SRS bouncer's (Terry Walsh) feet, in episode three of ROBOT, which was one of Christopher Barry's ideas for using the new costume.

The only elements retained from Jon Pertwee were the Sonic Screwdriver, and the Ankh-like TARDIS key introduced in THE TIME WARRIOR (serial VVV). ROBOT also marked the last regular appearance of Bessie in the programme. For a time it was kept by BBC Enterprises for promotional appearances, before being leased to the proprietors of the BBC **Doctor Who** exhibition on Blackpool's Golden Mile.

As the new Doctor was arriving, so Terrance Dicks was winding down as script editor, and Robert Holmes was starting to shape the season he was taking over. So it seemed the most efficient solution if Dicks' parting gift to the programme was written more or less from his old office at the BBC, with Barry Letts, Robert Holmes and trailing producer Philip Hinchcliffe on-hand both to advise and suggest in the former case, and to observe the mechanics of BBC production in the latter.

Terrance Dicks remembers: "Basically, I was leaving as script-editor to go back to being a freelance writer and I wanted to fix myself up with a job. So I invented an instant tradition – I went round saying to everybody, 'You do realise that it's traditional that when the script-editor retires he writes the first story of the next season?' And they said, 'Is it? Oh yes, so it is.' So I quite shamelessly fixed myself up with ROBOT, so that I knew I had at least one writing job to go out into the cold world with."

Terrance Dicks' aims with his script for ROBOT were "Just really to give a good launch to the new Doctor. And obviously to make it, and the whole thing, different from the Pertwee days. It was very much a kind of handing over the torch, because after having script edited DOCTOR WHO for so long, I was quite keen to write the first story, to have a kind of mark on what was going to follow after that. It was really my farewell to the series in many ways – it was a kind of handing over to those who were going to do it, particularly Bob of course. Really that – to launch the Doctor into a new incarnation as interestingly and as amusingly as possible."

Bob Holmes, as incoming script editor, asked Terrance Dicks for a robot story, "I sat down with Bob Holmes and he said, 'I've always wanted to do a story about a robot.' And I thought fine, let's do a story about a robot, and went away and played around with various ideas, and it all made sense with the **King Kong** concept."

Terrance Dicks' idea was to do a remake of **King Kong**. The powerful killer robot of pulp science fiction would be included, but through the properties of the 'living metal' from which it was made, it could grow to giant size. Also, it would learn reason and develop compassion. Just as King Kong had fallen for Fay Wray, so the robot could form an empathy with Sarah.

"It always struck me that although King Kong behaves very badly, you are always sympathetic towards it. It kills quite a few people gratuitously in the early scenes, and in the last New York scenes it does the same thing. There's a bit where it kidnaps a girl out of a skyscraper, and realises it's got the wrong one, and idly tosses her away – which is awful. But you are always sympathetic towards it. It was partly that, and I think the link was of something large and powerful that didn't realise its own strength that was softened by emotion for something small and vulnerable.

"The business of it growing to giant size at the end, which is really a bit of magic, is the most like KING KONG. The relationship with Kettlewell was very important – the father, and the father figure; the creator who betrayed his creation, and must therefore be destroyed. That and the kind of romance with Sarah – as far as you could get a human/robot romance! Not a lot of sex in **Doctor Who** in those days! All of those things I felt gave a nice mix of ingredients."

Christopher Barry comments: "Obviously it was at the back of one's mind, that it was a homage to **King Kong**. But I certainly was not trying to do a pastiche of any shots in **King Kong**. I didn't get it out and see it or anything beforehand. I think if I'd done that it would have become coy and arch. One just had to be aware that there was a precedent and try and make it as believeable as possible – unfortunately with toy tanks rather than model aeroplanes!

"I think there's one thing very different – and that's that King Kong was an animal, and people respond very differently to animals. I think if he'd been a robot, one wouldn't have felt so much for him. So, in ROBOT one had to get much more out of it. The biggest difference was that the robot could speak, and could express emotions.

THE robot itself was built twice, both costumes being provided by the freelance Alistair Bowtell Company. Both costumes were made specifically for actor Michael Kilgariff. The first was a light-weight mock-up which Kilgariff wore during studio rehearsals to facilitate assessments of camera shots and angles, and to give the proper impression of the robot's bulk when blocking the movements. The full robot costume was too heavy and cumbersome for Kilgariff to wear for prolonged periods of time.

For the same reason, where possible, especially in part one, before the robot's end-of-episode full appearance, only parts of the robot appeared in shot. For the first episode scenes where just the robot's arms appear, they were held by another tall actor, John East.

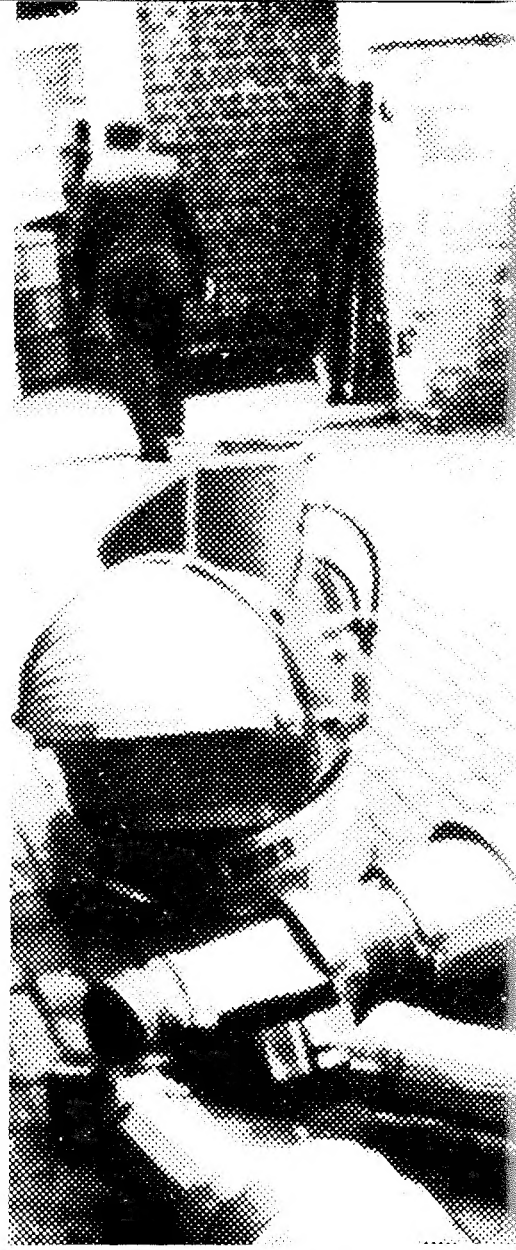
The 'real' robot costume was designed by James Acheson, rather than by the visual effects designer (Clifford Culley). Acheson wanted to construct the robot from a material that was hard and metallic, while at the same time having a shine to it (which ruled out anything finished in silver spray paint). As a result the costume was actually made from brushed aluminium. Acheson says: "It wasn't one of the those costumes that grew from a drawing. I chose to make it from aluminium sheeting, and only way that we could afford to use it was in strip form. We could bend it at right-angles, or we could create angles, and we could create tubes, and we could use it in flat sheets. But we couldn't create hemispheres or domes – the shoulder pieces were all made out of strips. His claws were balsa wood with aluminium cladding on the outside. In fact, what they were are those things you pick cornflakes packets off the top shelves of grocery stores with. They've got a handle and a 'grabber' at the other end.

"A job like that was not something normally the Costume Department would be expected to do. So we went out a bit on a limb, and did it anyway. Aluminium doesn't really come into the realm of the Costume Department. It was a bit daft really, because the most difficult thing to put on colour overlay is a reflective-surfaced costume. You're into all sorts of technical problems with using reflective surfaces. In fact it worked very well, the clipping (as the fuzz round the edge of the suit is called) didn't seem to be too much of a problem."

The robot's head was constructed with flashing lights inside. These were powered by a portable power-pack inside the costume, which meant they were not bright enough to show up on location, and in the studio the effect was rather diminished by the harsh studio lighting.

Jim Acheson designed the robot costume, not on paper, but by building a model of his idea (as he had done when he designed the mutant costumes for THE MUTANTS, serial NNN). Ironically, a model of the robot was later marketed commercially by Denys Fisher. Terrance Dicks still has one on his desk. He says: "I didn't want a Dalek, or a blob or anything, I wanted it so you could identify with it in a human kind of way. That was the brief – that it should be roughly humanoid (which is always easier, you can put a man inside!).

"The realisation of it, which I think was wonderful, was done by Jim Acheson. I do think that it was one of the most beautiful robots that has appeared in the history of science fiction! It was everything I wanted."



The robot's view, from which many scenes were shot in episode one, and several in episode four after the robot has grown, was achieved comparatively easily. Christopher Barry describes it: "That was my idea, and I did that because I wanted to get the feeling that we were into the robot's head. You can buy mosaic mirror in sheets to stick in glitzy discos, and the view was just reflected off a monitor in a sheet of that. We reversed the phase on the picture going into the monitor, so it came out the right way round, and then we put a camera on it. It degraded the image a bit, but not a lot."

One scene that was too complicated was dropped early on. As mentioned in the second edition of Terrance Dicks and Malcolm Hulke's *The Making of Doctor Who*, there was originally planned to be another scene between Sarah and the robot. Terrance Dicks: "There was a sequence where they think it's all over, and Sarah drives away from the bunker. I had a scene where the recovered robot steps out and clobbers her car, which might have been about half a day's shooting. Bob Holmes suggested, quite rightly, that we could achieve the same effect by having the robot staying behind in hiding, and it could all take place in the Bunker sets. That was purely an economic consideration."

MODELS were used for several scenes in ROBOT. The first is in episode one when the robot tunnels into Emmett's Electronics – the floor bursts open and the robot's claws appear. At the end of episode three (and in the reprise for episode four) a Palitoy Action Man tank was used, the tank being ChromaKeyed over a view of the robot outside the Think Tank bunker. Barry Letts comments: "Christopher Barry hated that; and it was entirely my fault! I was intrigued by the idea – as I always have been – of using models. And I

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wanted to see if we could get away with using a model tank, partly because it was so cheap!

Chris Barry didn't want to at all. Chris wanted to get the army in and sort out a location shoot, but we couldn't afford the time and the money as far as I was concerned. I thought we got away with it; but obviously we didn't! It was either that or not have the tank. Chris wanted me to take it out!"

Finally, models were used for some of the sequences with the robot giant-sized. Although a ChromaKey shot was used to show the robot's giant claw picking up Sarah, for scenes of the robot carrying her, a doll was used. Later, the robot picks up (then flings down) two UNIT soldiers (also dolls, in fact Palitoy Action Man). It also walks through a model building.

The UNIT helicopter over Emmett's Electronics in episode one was taken from stock newsreel footage.

The episode four scenes with the giant-sized robot were mainly achieved using ChromaKey. The pictures of the robot were mixed in the studio from ChromaKey feeds on to played back footage from the location shoot. A multiple feed shot was needed for the sequence where the Doctor throws the metal virus over the robot. Here location footage of Bessie and her passengers was mixed with a shot of the robot, plus a faded in inlay of the virus effect.

When the robot is destroyed by the metal virus, shrinking to 'normal' size, then collapsing, because of the constraints of the robot costume, actor Michael Kilgariff (in long shot) was lowered to the ground by visual effects assistants dressed entirely in blue. The sequence was shot using ChromaKey, so the robot appeared to fall (albeit slowly).

The ChromaKey work for ROBOT was complicated enough for an extra day to allocated entirely for setting up and recording ChromaKey sequences (June 7, 1974).

Two of the ChromaKey scenes with the robot giant-sized were constructed especially to give depth to the shots. One was where the robot's giant boot crushes a UNIT soldier, as another fires from behind. The other was where the robot is following soldiers up the road when another two fire from behind him. The robot then has to turn and come back at them. "It meant another pass on CSO, but it made it seem three-dimensional, that he was in the middle of things," (Christopher Barry).

It was also complicated enough for Inlay Operator Dave Jervis to go on location with the production crew to check that the shots he would ChromaKey the robot on to were suitable. An extra day out Outside Broadcast (OB) work was also needed.

One problem that the production team encountered on location at the BBC Technical Training Centre at Wood Norton (in Worcestershire), was the Official Secrets Act. Christopher Barry explains: "The famous thing there is this underground studio which was supposed to be a sort of regional broadcasting centre in the event of war. That was one reason we went of course – that vault would have been marvellous – then suddenly they said. 'Oh, it's secret – you can't show that! So that's why we had to build this wretched nastiness up on the hill side. Ian Rawnsley probably had to knock it up fairly fast, and it also had to be incredibly tall for the robot to get in the door, which didn't make it easy to have a thing sliding into the hill side."

The scene of the Doctor typing a note to Sarah at great speed (towards the end of episode two) was recorded on videodisc so that it could be speeded up. "At that time we had to go cap in hand to the Sports department, because they were the only people who had it in the BBC. You really had to go and beg, borrow or steal it..." (Christopher Barry).

The SRS symbol was based on the shape of the robot's head. It also resembled a Swastika, this symbolism being underlined in episode three when Hilda Winters gives what Chris Barry describes as her "Hitler from the pulpit" speech to the SRS.

THE first scene of ROBOT, with the exception of the actual regeneration, was re-recorded for ROBOT. This was not (as rumoured) either to avoid paying repeat fees for the PLANET OF THE SPIDERS sequence, or because Nicholas Courtney's hair had grown. It was simply to allow director Christopher Barry to 'pick up' Nicholas Courtney and Elisabeth Sladen for the next shot. It ensured that their positioning and movement was fluid between the shots.

The last line of ROBOT was worked out in rehearsals. It was Nicholas Courtney's idea to expand his line: "Doctor, about that dinner at the Palace." As he watches the TARDIS dematerialise, the Brigadier adds: "Well, I'll tell them you'll be a little late."

There were several similarities between ROBOT and Jon Pertwee's first story, SPEARHEAD FROM SPACE (serial AAA). Some, such as the Doctor keeping the TARDIS key in his shoe, were intentional. Another similarity is the brief medical examination which the Doctor helps Harry Sullivan to perform on him. As Terrance Dicks says: "That was a piece of script editor's continuity. Wherever possible, one remembered and put in these little cross references, almost automatically really. People who notice them notice them; and for people who don't, it doesn't do any harm."

ROBOT also echoed the all-film SPEARHEAD FROM SPACE in that it was the first **Doctor Who** story to be recorded entirely on video tape. Advances in technology had led to the development of portable colour video cameras. Like their studio cousins, they were linked by cables to a control room and recording suite. But being much smaller, they could be carried around on the shoulders of their operators rather than being mounted on pedestals all the time. The BBC's engineering wing at Evesham had already modified a portable version for use at sports fixtures, and **Z Cars** (the show which director Christopher Barry went to work on immediately following ROBOT) was the first programme to use the unit in drama production.

Barry Letts: "It was done on OB quite deliberately because we knew we were going to use CSO to put the robot into the location background with him in the studio. When we tried that as an experiment before – firstly in CARNIVAL OF MONSTERS (serial PPP) when the Drashig came up out of the hold, and secondly and more extensively in INVASION OF THE DINOSAURS – we used film.

"With the Drashig it was fine, just a quick shot. With the dinosaurs we had quite lengthy sequences. And the trouble with film is that, no matter how carefully it's shot, the telecine machines we had at that time don't have good registration and consequently the picture floats slightly. What happens if you put something absolutely rigid from video into a film background, the eye thinks that the background is still and the foreground thing is floating slightly.

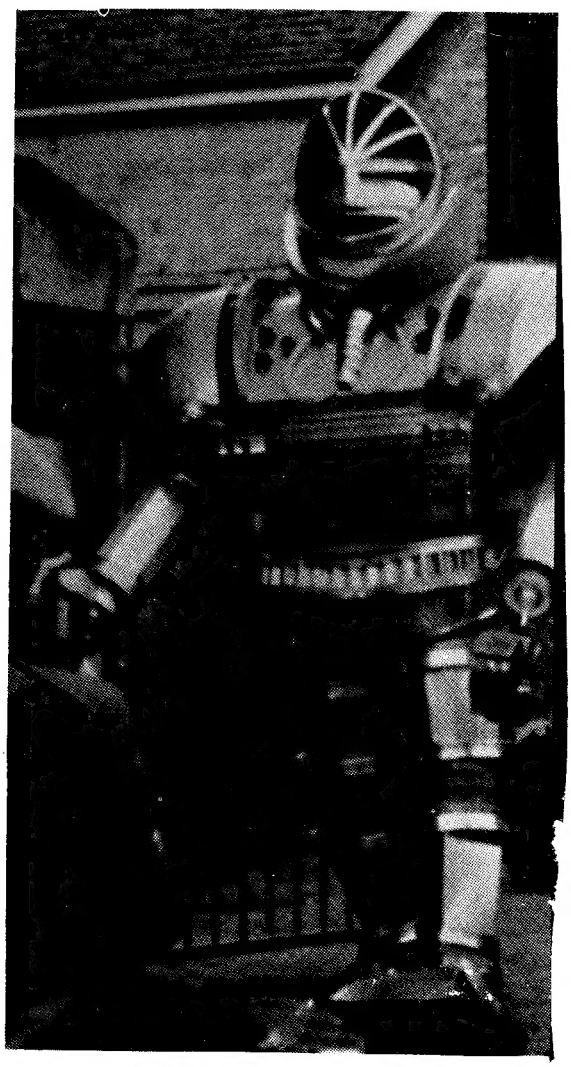
"I hated the stuff in INVASION OF THE DINOSAURS. That's no reflection on the people who did it, just that we were trying it too early. There was one shot where we had soldiers in the foreground hiding behind a street-sweeper's trolley put into this shot on film – and the result was that it was quite clear that it was phoney. So, we discussed it and came to the conclusion that the only solution was to put both the background and the foreground on video, because it's absolutely rock-steady. It was only because we could do that that we accepted the idea of doing ROBOT as we did.

"There was an OB unit at that time set aside for drama. You had to make a special bid for it, to make sure that you got it in good time."

Again, as with SPEARHEAD FROM SPACE, exterior shooting was done at the BBC's engineering facilities at Wood Norton, just outside Evesham. Some venues were redressed during shooting to economise on a need to move the OB vans. For example, the scene of the robot's first break-in, the focussing generator vault and the Think Tank premises were all one and the same site.

Exterior recording started in the last week of April 1974. But since the regeneration was recorded in the first block for the previous story, Tom Baker did not in fact debut in ROBOT a week before making his cameo appearance in the final episode of PLANET OF THE SPIDERS (serial ZZZ), as the dates might suggest.

A similarity between SPEARHEAD FROM SPACE and ROBOT which was not planned was that the show was affected by an industrial dispute (involving scenery staff) at the BBC. The cast and crew started work in studio TC3 on 21 May. By the following day, the dispute had become a full strike, and production ground to a halt. The studio planned for June 4 and 5 was rescheduled as a result.



However, the strike was quickly resolved, and **Doctor Who** re-entered the studio for June 1 and 2 (the recording session being brought forward from June 4 and 5). The scenes recorded (under difficulty) on May 21 were reshot. Recording was completed on June 6 and 7.

Editing took place on 24 June (09:00-16:15) and 4 July (09:00-18:00). The dubbing took place rather later, with episodes one, two and three being done on 16, 17, 20 December 1974, respectively. Episode four was not dubbed until 7 January, 1975 (for transmission on 18 January).

All four episodes of ROBOT were completed without their title sequences. Bernard Lodge's graphics, a reworking of the slit-scan techniques used for the season 11 titles, employing new photographic elements (the TARDIS and Tom Baker as the Doctor), were not ready until the autumn. Christopher Barry first saw them at 8pm on 6 December 1974 (in TC 7). They were edited into ROBOT during the studio sessions for the next sessions for the next story to go into the studios, THE ARK IN SPACE (serial 4C). □

Television's new Dr Who, Tom Baker, with a "Cyberman". Mr Baker, aged 40, the fourth Dr Who, will be creating the role on film over the next nine months and is to appear before young viewers about Christmas. "I want to play him in an individual way", he said, "with the suggestion that although he has a human body he comes from somewhere else." Jon Pertwee is quitting the series after four years as Dr Who.

Tom mix

FOR a long while after Jon Pertwee had announced his resignation, thoughts in the **Doctor Who** Production office centred around casting an older man in the part to contrast with the dashing, man-of-action figure established over the previous five years. A prime contender for the role was veteran action Richard Hearne. Barry Letts even invited him up to the **Doctor Who** offices to discuss thoughts of the new Doctor being a 'young man trapped in an old man's body.'

But, if an old actor was cast, it was reasoned, he could hardly be expected to tackle fight scenes and action sequences. Even allowing for the provision of stunt doubles, the audience would never accept such behaviour from so overtly elderly a figure as believable.

So Harry Sullivan was created. Actor Ian Marter was cast in the role by Barry Letts, who ironically had almost given him the part of Captain Mike Yates back in 1970. Sullivan was a throwback to the days of Ian Chesterton and Jamie McCrimmon – the hero figure, there to protect the physically frail whenever brute strength was needed. Terrance Dicks:

"The thought was that you might get an 'unphysical' Patrick Troughton-like Doctor. Whenever there was a fight. Troughton tended to hide and send Jamie sailing in. In fact that didn't work out, which is one of the reasons there were problems with Harry as a companion – there wasn't quite enough for Harry to do."

But Harry was to be no thug. In the best tradition of **Doctor Who** male leads, he was to be a gentleman too. Terrance Dicks describes him in the script for ROBOT as:

"A large, burly young man in naval uniform. His social manner is a bit hearty, but he becomes calm and professional when at work."

But thinking between the **Doctor Who** office and Head of Serials (Bill Slater) veered towards a younger actor for the part. One time 'Carry On' actor Jim Dale was high on the list before Slater recommended that Letts and Dicks see the movie **The Golden Voyage of Sinbad** featuring an RSC actor called Tom Baker. Within the space of three meetings, Tom Baker moved from working as a hod-carrier on a building site into one of the most coveted roles on television.

In response to the suave but precise Harley Street Doctor of Jon Pertwee, Terrance Dicks devised his successor as a lateral-thinking, hyperactive eccentric. To emphasise these traits to the actor and director, Dicks littered his ROBOT script with a series of notes to explain the errant Time Lord's motives. He is, for example:

"Seemingly ignorant of people's conversation, pre-occupied with child-like pursuits – although actually deep in concentration."

Christopher Barry found this "a constructive stage direction as to how that scene should be approached. You might miss the point altogether if you didn't have that and do something quite different. Which might be quite interesting, but I happen to be one of those directors who, on the whole, likes to be faithful to his writer."

Later, as the Doctor lazes in the back of a Land Rover, the script notes:

"He has a general tendency to adopt gawky, sprawling stances. It is a characteristic of his new incarnation that he always tends to lie, lean, perch or hang in some unlikely position rather than sitting conventionally."

Concerning the Doctor's fight with the SRS guards at their meeting, Dicks writes:

"This incident is typical of the new Doctor's form of self-defence, which might be described as 'unintentional Aikido.' Doctor Who never seems to take any aggressive action, but his opponent invariably comes to grief in some apparently accidental way."

> *"Tom in the flesh does have this type of loony scatterbrain"*

Terrance Dicks says: "There was very little to go on, except that I had actually met Tom by then and talked to him, so I had some idea what he was like. And I'd been in on the casting of Tom before I wrote the script. Tom in the flesh does have this type of loony scatter brain, so I played on that very much. I also used the device, which you can always use in the first episode, that the new regeneration is always unstable. So he starts off being rather crazy, and gradually quietens down and becomes more reasonable by the end of it. So I thought, if they don't like that interpretation or if Tom doesn't like that interpretation, they could always say 'Well, he was a bit weird then but he's different now, he's stable.' In fact I think they always kept quite a lot of that arbitrary erraticness that I started him off with.

"Though the changes are superficial. It's always the same man; his surface mannerisms may change. So the actual dramatic thing of writing the serious Doctor stuff actually changes very little indeed. The flourishes are different, and the kind of jokes and witticisms.

"One of the things that we didn't want was to have the thing of because the Doctor's changed appearance, people saying 'But you can't be the Doctor, he doesn't look like that!' which is always a sort of a bugbear. So we decided that we'd have the change take place under everybody's nose. The Brigadier knows it's the Doctor, because he's seen the change. The identity of the Doctor was never in doubt – we'd already done all that."

Tom Baker was a 40 year-old bachelor with much experience in stage and films, but comparatively unknown in television. He was the youngest Doctor yet, but at 6ft 3in just half an shorter than his predecessor Jon Pertwee. He was overjoyed at the chance to "have a bash at **Doctor Who**."

Liverpool-born Tom Baker decided to adopt his own approach to the role: "with the suggestion that although Doctor Who has a human body, he comes from somewhere else."

At the age of fifteen, Baker was spotted acting in amateur dramatics, and asked if he would like to go to Ireland's famous Abbey Theatre. Though he was in favour, his mother was not. Shortly afterwards, when a monk came to talk to his school and Tom became enthusiastic about entering a monastery, his mother had no objections. He passes his novitiate in Jersey with the borthers of the order of Ploermel. At twenty he realised that he was not suited to the prieasthood and left the monastery. Almost immediately he was called up for two years' service in the army, where he served with the Medical Corps.

On demobilisation he went to drama school on a grant from Liverpool, and on leaving worked with various repertory companies. It was whilst acting at York that he was spotted by a director of the National Theatre. He was 34, and was soon under contract for two and a half years, during which he played a variety of roles, one of the most memorable being the Prince of Morocco in Laurence Olivier's **Othello**. His success in this "notably eye-rolling part" led to his first film, and the similarly eye-rolling part of Rasputin in Sam Spiegal's **Nicholas and Alexandra**. Between that and **Doctor Who** he worked on many films, including **Dear Parents**, Pasolini's **Canterbury Tales, The Vault of Horror, Luther, The Mutation**, and of course **The Golden Voyage of Sinbad.**

In between films, Tom spent a season playing leading roles at the Bristol Old Vic as well as receiving excellent notices for his performance in **The Novelist** at the Hampstead Theatre Club. He also appeared on BBC tv in **The Millionairess** starring Maggie Smith, in which he played the Egyptian doctor.

In 1973 Tom Baker played the lead in **Macbeth** at the Shaw Theatre and before starting in **Doctor Who**, made the television film **The Author of Beltraffio**.

Before starting as the Doctor, Tom Baker listed his hobbies as Guinness, beautiful women and collecting strange epitaphs from tombstones. His image was hardly that of a superstar – he had hardly any possessions, no car, and only one suit. The story that he was working as a hod-carrier on a building site when he was offered the part is well known. As Tom Baker said at the time, "The most expensive thing that I own is a leather overcoat." □

CONTEXT

CAST

DR WHO ..... Tom Baker (Jon Pertwee)
SARAH JANE SMITH ..... Elisabeth Sladen
BRIGADIER LETHBRIDGE STEWART ..... Nicholas Courtney
SURGEON LIEUTENANT HARRY SULLIVAN ..... Ian Marter
R.S.M. BENTON ..... John Levene
HILDA WINTERS ..... Patricia Maynard
ARNOLD JELLICOE ..... Alec Linstead
PROFESSOR J.P. KETTLEWELL ..... Edward Burnham
ROBOT K.1 ..... Michael Kilgarriff
SHORT ..... Timothy Craven
JOSEPH CHAMBERS ..... Walter Goodman
MOD GUARD ..... John Scott Martin
THINKTANK SECURITY GUARD .... Pat Gorman
STRETCHER BEARERS ..... Leslie Weekes, Nigel Stevens
TALL MAN (for Robot's hand) ..... John East
GUARD (dead body) ..... George Howse
BOUNCER ..... Terry Walsh
WALK-ONS ..... Ian Young, Desmond Verini, Geoff Farnell
EXTRAS ..... Clive Barrie, David Pelton, Brian Moorhead, Eric French, Alan Crisp, Donald Stratford, Tim Blackstone, Douglas Domingo, Alan Thomas, Geoffrey Witherick, Derek Parks, Penny Lambirth, Elizabeth Broom, Pat Pelton, Alex Hood, Roy Pearce, Barry McDonald, Jay McCarth, Michael Reynel, Noel Crowder, Davids Eynon, Leon Maybank, Nancy Adams, Maureen Nelson, Pamela Dale, David Patterson, David Playdon, Hugh Ward, Raymond Savage, Dennis Lycett, Bill Bingham, Steve Rivers, Fred Garratt, Norman Littlejohns, Alan Hinton, Brian Fellows, George Bayliss, Alan Bicini, Norman Colson, Richard Martin, John Milner, Roger Squires, David Parker, Christopher Carrington, Peter Isley, Gordon Wall, Ray Knight, Jack Parker, Douglas Read, Colin Hamilton.

CREW

PRODUCTION ASSISTANT: Peter Grimwade
ASSISTANT FLOOR MANAGER: David Tilley
DIRECTOR'S ASSISTANT: Joy Sinclair
FLOOR ASSISTANT: Geoffrey Posner
STUDIO LIGHTING: Nigel Wright
TECHNICAL MANAGER: Derek Thompson
STUDIO SOUND: John Holmes
GRAMS OPERATOR: Gordon Phillipson
VISION MIXER: Graham Giles
INLAY OPERATOR: Dave Jervis
SENIOR CAMERMAN: Colin Reid
CREW: 18
OB LIGHTING: John Mason
OB SOUND: Vic Godrich, Trevor Webster
COSTUME DESIGNER James Acheson (Begonia Pope)
MAKE-UP ARTIST: Judy Clay
ASSISTANTS: Ann Edward & Gail Glaser
VISUAL EFFECTS DESIGNER: Clifford Culley
ROBOT CONSTRUCTION: The Alistair Bowtell Effects Company
DESIGNER: Ian Rawnsley
INCIDENTIAL MUSIC: Dudley Simpson
SPECIAL SOUND: Dick Mills
PRODUCTION UNIT MANAGER: George Gallaccio
SCRIPT EDITOR: Robert Holmes
PRODUCER: Barry Letts
TRAILING PRODUCER: Philip Hinchcliffe
DIRECTOR: Christopher Barry

TRANSMISSION

28th DEC '74 – 17.35 (24'11")
4th JAN '75 – 17.32 (25'00")
11th JAN '75 – 17.30 (24'29")
18th JAN '75 – 17.31 (24'29")

RECORDING

OB Recording – 28th, 29th, 30th April, 1st May 1974, BBC Engineering Training Centre, Evesham.
Studio recording – 21st May, 2nd, 6th, 7th June 1974, TC3

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Radio Times: w/e 28.12.74, 4.1.75, 11.1.75, 18.1.75

FILMS

King Kong, (Cooper/Schoedsach, 1933)
Metropolis, (Fritz Lang, 1926)

Audience

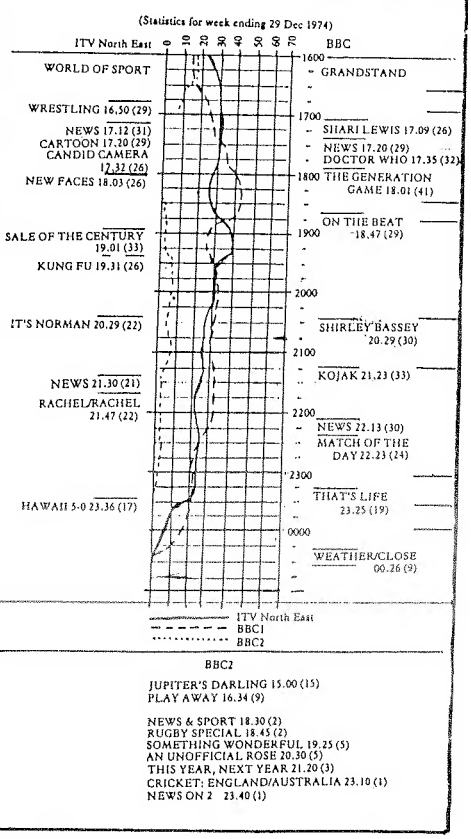
TOM Baker's era as the Doctor saw the programme establish itself as a popular element in BBC-1's increasingly strong Saturday night schedule. Typically, the BBC's dominance throughout prime-time on Saturdays in autumn would follow on from **Grandstand** and then, with **Shari Lewis**, **News/Sport** and **Doctor Who**, the evening was captured by the immensely successful **Bruce Forsyth's Generation Game**.

Different ITV regions would vary the opposition ranked against the BBC's national schedule, which maintained a high audience through to **Match of the Day** by means of American film series or a movie. In the North East, a sizeable share of the audience would switch from the conveyor-belt ending of **Generation Game** to Nicholas Parsons' giveaway gameshow **Sale of the Century**.

Doctor Who's popularity is certainly partly attributable to Bruce Forsyth (with a *national* audience of 6.95 million homes) plus a launch in Christmas week, in which viewing figures are usually higher; for each week of ROBOT in this ITV region, the initial audience of **Doctor Who** actually fell before picking up nearer to Forsyth's appearance. Faced with opposition in other regions (see future issues), **Doctor Who** does not fare so well comparatively.

In the diagram below for WEEK ENDING 29 DEC 1974 (ROBOT part one) in the NORTH EAST, the figures after the titles indicate start times, and in brackets the share (the percentage of the available audience watching that particular programme).

Overall for that week, **Doctor Who** was the eighth most popular programme in the region (top was Forsyth and **Ice Station Zebra**). The BBC took eight of the national top ten, and with the PLANET OF THE SPIDERS compilation repeat the day before, the new Doctor had a very secure launch.



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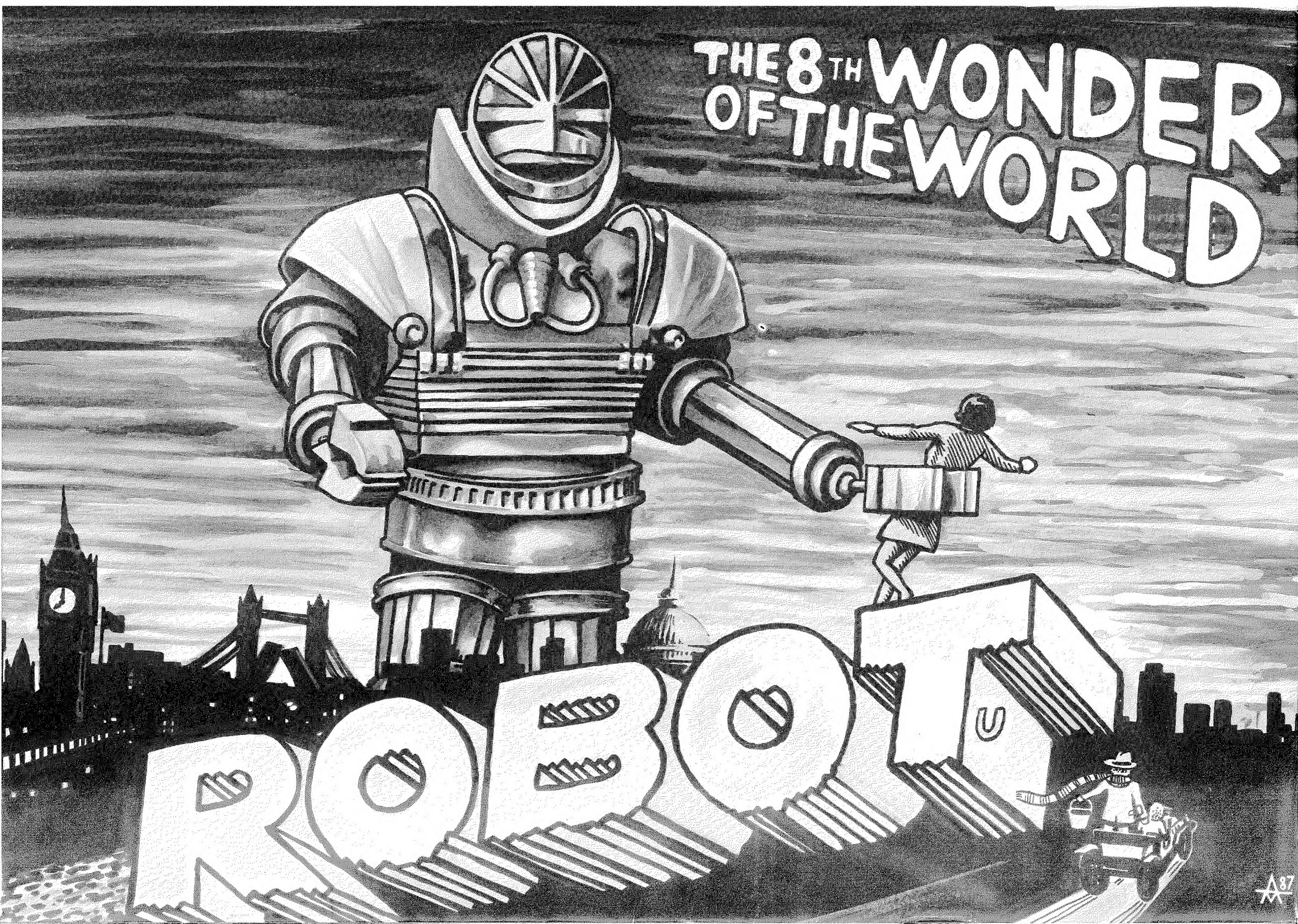
THE 8TH WONDER OF THE WORLD
ROBOT
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